NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6029 JULY 25, 1978
FRED BROWN/NEW DELHI

PAKISTAN POLITICS

ANNCR:

PAKISTANI POLITICAL PARTIES ARE DIVIDED OVER PLANS BY THE COUNTRY'S MILITARY GOVERNMENT TO HOLD LOCAL ELECTIONS BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR ON A NON-PARTY BASIS. VOA CORRESPONDENT FRED BROWN HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

THE DECISION TO HOLD LOCAL ELECTIONS WAS ANNOUNCED LAST MONTH BY THE COUNTRY'S CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL MOHAMMED ZIA UL-HAQ. AT THE SAME TIME, HE DISCLOSED PLANS FOR FORMATION OF A NEW NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. GENERAL ZIA SAID BOTH TASKS WERE DESIGNED TO HELP THE COUNTRY FOR A RETURN TO ELECTED CIVILIAN RULE.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED JULY FIFTH, THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF GENERAL ZIA'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER. HOWEVER, GENERAL ZIA HAS CONTINUED THE BAN ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES THAT HAS BEEN IN EFFECT SINCE MARCH ON GROUNDS THE COUNTRY IS NOT YET READY FOR SUCH ACTIVITY. THIS MEANS THE LOCAL ELECTIONS WILL HAVE TO BE WAGED ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS RATHER THAN WITH POLITICAL PARTIES HAVING A SAY IN CHOOSING CANDIDATES.

THE PLAN FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS HAS DRAWN A MIXED RESPONSE FROM THE GROUPS THAT MAKE UP THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE -- THE COALITION OF PARTIES THAT FOUGHT FORMER PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO IN LAST YEAR'S CONTROVERSIAL MARCH ELECTIONS. THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE P.N.A., PROFESSOR GHABOOR AHMED, EXPRESSED FEAR THAT LOCAL OFFICIALS ELECTED ON SUCH A BASIS WILL BECOME SUBSERVIENT TO THE MILITARY.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PLANS FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS WERE DEFENDED BY BEGUM NASIM WALIKHAN, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, A GROUP BELONGING TO THE P.N.A. MISSUS WALIKHAN CALLED THE ELECTIONS AN ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP TOWARD RETURNING THE COUNTRY TO DEMOCRACY. BUT ANOTHER CRITIC OF THE GOVERNMENT, RETIRED AIR MARSHALL ASGHAR KHAN, COMPLAINED THAT THE MOVE HAS MADE GENERAL ELECTIONS MORE DISTANT.

MEANWHILE, MYSTERY CONTINUES TO SURROUND THE MURDER OF A PROMINENT PAKISTANI POLITICAL LEADER LAST WEEK. THE VICTIM, HAJI JAMALI, WAS GUNNED DOWN LAST FRIDAY IN QATAR, THE CAPITAL OF BALUCHISTAN. MISTER JAMALI WAS PRESIDENT OF THE BALUCHISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE. THE MUSLIM LEAGUE IS THE ONLY PAKISTANI POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTED IN GENERAL ZIA'S NEW GOVERNMENT. POLICE REPORTEDLY ARE QUESTIONING SEVEN PERSONS DETAINED AFTER THE SHOOTING. BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO WORD ON A POSSIBLE MOTIVE.

JS/PY